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ABSTRACT

In this overview of the Planning Educational Environments for Cleveland Children Project a comparison of selected change principles is made. These principles were taken from the change literature and were incorporated into the project design. The key features identified in the literature include: (1) the unit of change, (2) staff participation in planning, (3) goal clarity, communication and consensus, (4) change agents, (5) consultants, (6) staff retraining and reward, (7) resources necessary for successful change, (8) resistance to change, and (9) support of the bureaucracy. The paper also discusses the implications of productive and counterproductive elements generated by this project for renewal and reform in urban school districts. The counterproductive and productive effects, while unique to this specific project, suggest implications for renewal and reform in urban districts. For example, it is clear that organized, planned programs of change must be implemented. It is also clear that at least six critical prerequisites need to be considered to support such reform efforts. These include provisions for financial bases, role clarification, bureaucratic support, knowledge bases, staff retraining efforts, and planning a development and evaluation model. In this study, momentum for change appeared to be significantly linked to these prerequisites. (Author/AH)

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REALITY BASED URBAN SCHOOL INNOVATION

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A B S T R A C T

REALITY BASED URBAN SCHOOL INNOVATION

A school-based reform project in a large urban school district demonstrated productive and counterproductive effects. These effects, while unique to this specific effort, do suggest implications for renewal and reform in urban districts. It is clear that organized, planned programs of change must be implemented. It is also clear that at least six critical prerequisites need to be considered to support such reform efforts. These prerequisites include provisions for financial bases, role clarification, bureaucratic supports, knowledge bases, staff retraining efforts and planning, development and evaluation model.

In this experience, momentum for change appeared to be significantly linked to these prerequisites.

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REALITY BASED URBAN SCHOOL INNOVATION

Participation in this symposium presents an opportunity to describe an effort in school reform in a large urban school district. The perspective of this paper is that of a central staff member, specifically director of the school district's research and development unit.

The organization of this paper includes an overview of the reform project, a comparison of selected change principles from the literature with certain key features provided for this project and a discussion of the implications of the productive and counterproductive elements generated by this project for renewal and reform in urban school districts.

I. Overview of the Project

On that day in December 1972, the green marble board room in the Cleveland Board of Education building echoed and re-echoed as a special task force detailed possibilities for a venture into school reform. Nationally recognized consultants had joined local staff in critiquing plans and brainstorming ideas for the project. Miraculously, funding was in place. A Cleveland-based foundation, the George Gund Foundation, had pledged support. The school district had committed itself to support a special project in educational improvement. Several months of discussion between Foundation and school district representatives had forged this cooperative effort. For once, the prospect of a secure financial base promised to prevent the typical "shrinking fund syndrome" common to many school reform projects.

The "touchstone" of this reform effort, which came to be known as the Planning Educational Environments for Cleveland Children Project, was to be "collegial planning." The task force stressed that this venture had the possibility of demonstrating the potential of the team planning process for school improvement. Ideally, so called improvements would not be handed down to schools. The schools would design their own improvements through team planning. This process was visualized as the critical and, in fact, the only real basis for improvement of particular school situations. More than likely, the school staff would be willing to risk implementing their locally devised innovations. Their ownership of the problems and solutions would be critical to their commitment. Staff insight would produce new needs for staff development programs to implement the programs.

Most importantly, the key elements of the planning process would be analyzed and translated into operational plans. This planning process then would be diffused to additional schools. Of course, the final hope would be that the students served at these schools would perform at anticipated as the result of the new environment created by the staff.

Two schools were invited to participate and accepted the invitation. Both schools were two of a total of 15 elementary schools serving one junior high attendance area in a predominantly Black area of the city. One school, built in 1964, and the other in 1921, represented contrasts in plant, facilities, staff, instructional climate and administrative leadership. With 54 per cent of the children from families receiving public assistance in one school and 50 per cent in the second school, the schools were well above the city-wide poverty rate. Pupil turnover rates of 58 and 55 per cent at these buildings exceeded the city-wide mobility rate. The schools, while unique, represented typical inner-city institutions. As prototypes, the schools would form the nucleus for future diffusion of the team planning process to other Cleveland elementary schools.

The task force produced a proposal for a one year planning grant. The year's planning grant, as a pre-operational phase of the project, was implemented in 1973-1974. During this period, school staffs assisted by a project manager plunged into the planning tasks. By and large, the planning sessions were scheduled during after school hours. Occasionally Saturday meetings were utilized. All team members received payment for such meetings at the rate established by the union contract for the district. During this pre-operational stage, various tasks were addressed such as assessment of needs, interpretation of school performance data and the development of objectives for project activities. These directions were translated into a

proposal by a staff member of the Division of Research and Development for submission to the Foundation.

A paramount concern of the Foundation, at the advice of the consultants, was that diffusion of the planning process be implemented in other Cleveland schools without delay, even before effects were evaluated in the demonstration schools. The July, 1974 proposal to the Foundation, therefore, featured diffusion objectives as well as operational objectives framed by the school staffs from their year's experiences in team planning. The programmatic objectives for one school proposed improvement of the reading and mathematics program through alteration of the basic instructional approach and reorganization of instructional groups across grade levels. A daily uninterrupted block of time was to be utilized for reading and mathematics. Development of pupil self concept was another primary focus of this school in the July, 1974 plan. A cross-grade enrichment program was implemented in pre-kindergarten, kindergarten and grades 1 and 2 at this school. A special learning center, dubbed "The Room" provided enrichment and motivation for pupils.

Programmatic objectives for the second school aimed at improvement of reading. School day organization was altered to accommodate integration of reading instruction into the content areas. Individualized, evaluation-based instruction was implemented. Parent involvement was another dominant feature of the effort at this school with parents engaging in clerical and tutoring activities for various classes.

Staff development, through a series of field-based graduate courses offered by a local university, was an adjunct to the changes at both schools. Both schools had identified a major need to upgrade teaching competencies in implementing their redesigned programs. In addition, field persons as-

signed by the university, worked in each school assisting teachers in case studies, implementing goals they established and utilizing individualized instruction methods.

As it developed, the Planning Educational Environments for Cleveland Children (PEECC) enjoyed five-year funding support from the Foundation. This provided for one and a half years of planning and two and a half subsequent years for development and implementation of the program at the two project schools. In 1976 and 1977 programming, diffusion became the central focus of efforts. A manager was recruited to act as a training facilitator for diffusion schools. Training modules which demonstrated the planning process and utilized mini-project activity were developed for use in the diffusion schools. A Diffusion Task Force, with membership of key administrators, supervisors and research and development personnel was organized. The Task Force became a major influence when, on its advice, the school district contributed the services of a support teacher team which allowed release of teacher teams to engage in planning during the school day. Six schools were recruited for 1976 with an additional five schools joining the project in 1977. Presently, it is anticipated that Foundation funding will end in June 1978.

II. Certain Prerequisites--Critical and Otherwise

The literature abounds with analyses of conditions and characteristics related to educational change and school reform. A glimpse of this voluminous condition can be demonstrated in considering the output of a recent search request to the ERIC system. Terms such as "educational change" and "organizational change" generated almost 350 citations. Although this situation does suggest that would-be investigators need to clarify and delimit their topics, the proliferation of "change literature" reflects the complexities of the process. The fact that many good minds and dedicated hearts are into the matter of school change is a good omen. The certain failure in the literature in such a prolific way, at that, to order the complexities in the change arena is worrisome.

Of course, no writer debates the inevitability of change. Change is the only constant in the human situation. But the quality of change today is different from ever before. As Oppenheimer (1975) masterfully characterizes the situation:

In an important sense this world of ours is a new world, in which the unity of knowledge, the nature of human communities, the order of society, the order of ideas, the very notions of society and culture have changed and will not return to what they have been in the past. What is new is new not because it has never been there before, but because it has changed in quality...One thing that is new is the prevalence of newness, the changing scale and scope of change itself, so that the world alters as we walk in it...We need to recognize the change and learn what resources we have.¹

The contemporary debate about the schools and change appears to resolve around the need to recognize what has to be changed as well as the resources available for such change. Given the range and complexity of prescriptions for ways in which the schools must change are "welters of schemes for bringing it about" which as Culver and Hoban (1973) observe,

still leave the educator with two central questions: What changes should be made? and, How are such changes to be brought about?² In the flurry of discussion, planned change receives scant attention and some writers emphasize the newness rather than goodness of the innovation. "An innovation," observes Havelock, (1974) "is any practice or product which is new...It does not have to be better, although some may be..."³ This situation could portend ominous consequences, when closer study indicates some critics appear to call for change for change's sake. Bennis, Benne, Chin and Corey (1976) define planned change as "planful application of valid and appropriate knowledge in human affairs for the purpose of creating intelligent action and change."⁴ They urge "planned change" as the only feasible consideration to two directly counterposed idea systems, which they describe as a "laissez-faire nonintervention doctrine" on one hand and "Marxian radical intervention doctrine" on the other.

The particular interest of this paper is in key elements from the literature which have relevance to the local experience. In this selective sampling of the literature, an attempt is made to locate propositions which might provide a perspective for analyses of the events in the project under study. Six areas of concern which emerged in the local project provide the framework for the literature search. First, the state of the art in school change and innovation is important to provide a focus in relation to what the experts might say. Next, characteristics of innovative organizations and the idiosyncracies of school organizations seem pertinent. A third theme is the application of promising change dynamics, while a fourth topic would be phenomena such as resistance to change. Change agents and use of consultants in the change process appear as a fifth theme. Finally, a sixth category is the retraining or adult socialization problem.

From the onset of this change project, our foray into the change arena was not without an "eye on the literature." As practitioners, we have always been interested in what the experts were advising. If we were to be guilty of serious omissions and miscalculations in the development of the project, we did not want it to be because of a shoddy working knowledge of the change literature. A major hope for the project was that our change strategies could be modeled from those that had been empirically documented in the research literature. Our interest was and continues to be one of a search for direction and verification of the "appropriate and effective." The literature, therefore, offers a framework of propositions with which we must deal in self-analysis of our change project.

During the life of the project, various themes in the change literature appear to have remained static, with some minor exceptions. A recent selective review produces these directions in relation to our six areas of concern.

State of the Art:

- . The literature on change is contradictory and confidence is not warranted in a number of currently held generalizations about organizational change because research methods and statistical analyses have been inadequate (Giacquinta 1973).⁵
- . Few studies effectively make the bridge between the substantial body of change theory and the rich body of change practice. (Bennis, Benne, Chin and Corey, 1976).⁶
- . Most educational innovations and social programs have unclear technology, long-range payoff, complex organizational rather than individual adoption processes and unclear evaluations. (Baldrige, 1974)⁷

Characteristics of Innovative Organizations:

- . Certain organizational characteristics considered to be inhibitive for innovative behavior (size, complexity, role specialization, central decision-making and the like) may actually be powerful influences for innovation. (Baldrige 1974)⁸

- Schools may not be as genuinely bureaucratic as critics would have their audiences believe; more likely schools exercise degrees of bureaucratic behavior with activities falling along a continuum. (Bidwell, 1965; Lortie, 1977)^{9,10}
- Bureaucratic phenomena per se are frequently equated with change resistance and impenetrability, but the term in principle is neutral. Given the tasks of the schools, no adequate substitute for bureaucracy has been found. (Tumin, 1977)¹¹
- Educational systems have special properties which need to be reckoned with. These include goal ambiguity, input variability, role performance, invisibility, low interdependence, vulnerability, lay-professional control problems and low technological investment. (Miles, 1965)¹²

Promising Change Strategies:

- Rank-and-file membership participation in organizational decision-making with their superiors remains largely unsubstantiated as a general law of innovation. (Giacquinta, 1973)¹³
- Lasting educational change will come about only when practitioners see themselves as change agents. (Tye and Novotney, 1975)¹⁴
- Although change is inevitable, most people tend to resist change; sometimes people will not decide to change unless suitable payoffs or rewards are provided. (Kauffman, Feldman, Snyder, Coffey, 1975)¹⁵
- The school is the most strategic unit in which to develop improved schooling. (Goodlad in Culver and Hoban, 1973)¹⁶
- Three basic requirements are necessary for successful intervention. These include valid information, free choice and internal commitment. (Argyris, 1970)¹⁷

Resistance to Change:

- Resistance to change continues to be treated as a practical difficulty of organizations that requires a remedy and not as a social phenomenon requiring systematic inquiry and explanation. (Giacquinta, 1973)¹⁸
- Change problems are not primarily related to rationality but to people's feelings. (Sergiovanni and Elliott, 1975)¹⁹

Change Agents and Consultants:

- . The real agents of change are the teachers. Change in education means change in teachers. (Sergiovanni and Elliott, 1975) ²⁰
- . Change strategies stressing participation with or without outside change agents so that both superiors and subordinates have equal opportunity and power to influence change decisions are insufficiently supported by empirical data. (Leavitt, 1965 in Giacuinta, 1973) ²¹
- . Failure of planners to work collaboratively with those for whom they plan contributes to the well known American mistrust of the highly trained, academically grounded expert. (Bennis, Benne, Chin and Corey, 1976) ²²

Retraining or Adult Socialization:

- . The need for retraining personnel is attested to by educators but the degree of retraining and its impact on the change efforts remains largely undocumented. (Giacuinta, 1973) ²³

In retrospect, it is interesting to relate key features incorporated into the project design to particular elements which the literature considers to be critical prerequisites for change projects.

1. Unit of Change

The project schools were visualized as the units for change, with resources of time and money being provided directly to the schools without approval from higher levels of district administrative staff.

2. Staff participation in Planning

The school staffs were to be organized into planning teams so that they might engage in collegial planning, accepting responsibility for the programs designed through such a process. The principal was to be a facilitator and support to this process.

3. Goal Clarity, Communication and Consensus

Goal clarity was to be developed as a result of staff's planning of programs to respond to the needs which the staff would first determine for the school. The staff would be encouraged to develop clear objectives for their programs. Planning decisions would be made by the staff through democratic processes.. This situation would build consensus.

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4. Change Agents

The proposal viewed the teachers as responsible for changes in the school program through the programs they would implement in their classrooms. With free choices and internal commitment through their participation, teachers would function successfully.

5. Consultants

Consultants, both from the school district and from outside of the school district, would be made available to the project.

6. Staff Retraining and Rewards

As the staffs identified the changes to be implemented in their educational programs, they would recognize the need to upgrade their competencies in many of these teaching areas. To meet these possibilities, a local university would provide tailor-made courses to support the teachers' intervention strategies. Teachers would receive university credit, and in some cases, a graduate degree for completion of this work.

7. Resources Necessary for Successful Change

A project manager would be engaged to service the project schools to provide access to informational resources, seeking the same both within the district and without. Funding would support planning which was to be scheduled for each school, usually on an after-school and weekend basis. Stipends would be paid to the staff. Limited numbers of supportive staff necessitated by whatever program changes were implemented would be made available.

8. Resistance to Change

Resistance to change, particularly from the school staff, would be minimized through the guarantee of free choice in participation and the democratic processes to be applied in team planning.

9. Bureaucratic Phenomena

Through support at the highest administrative level of the school district provided through an Advisory Task Force, a deliberate attempt would be made to incorporate "protection" into the project. Key administrators and supervisors were involved through this Task Force not only in receiving the inputs from the project but directing use of resources to its support.

It is evident that deliberate efforts were made to design the project according to the most facilitating dimensions for change. Inclusion of various progressive procedures or structures, per se, did not guarantee meaningful change. The project structures, of course, were never considered to be cybernetic mechanisms. As it developed, we were to learn a good deal about the difference between "animate and inanimate" components.

III. Implications--What Did We Learn?

This section of the paper attempts to accomplish two purposes. It identifies productive and counterproductive elements emerging from project operations. Second, it discusses implications for renewal and reform activities in urban school districts.

A Background

Since the middle sixties, there have been several efforts to develop a base for program renewal in the Cleveland district. These efforts have always had the tacit support of the district superintendent. Given the critical demands of his office, however, his efforts in this direction have been limited. Momentum has been continued by staff in several capacities--the assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction, major academic subject supervisors, elementary school principals, research and development associates and supervisors, as well as the assistant superintendent of the department of special projects. Many of these personnel formed the nucleus of a key task force which had undertaken extensive development activities for a model of curriculum reform, Toward Dynamic Curriculum. When their development work culminated in June, 1970, the Cleveland Board of Education adopted the product as the official model for curriculum reform and renewal in the Cleveland district. This situation established a base of support and readiness in the district for a concept of curriculum reform. Importantly, this model emphasized the role of the local school as the unit of change within the district. School staff--principals and teachers, were viewed as the agents for such change. Unfortunately, events militated against the likelihood of installation of

of the model in the schools during this period. Financial constraints grew critical. Desegregation litigation created extensive demands upon the staff. Activities were confined to those designated for the central staff rather than the schools' staffs. Supervisors, together with their curriculum committees, undertook extensive revision and modernization of their subject disciplines. This analysis included attempts to relate all curricula to the developmental levels of the students to be involved. During this period, little direction was given to the individual schools for carrying through their roles in adaptation and coordination of the model for the local school. A majority of schools, however, succeeded in organizing curriculum advisory committees involving staff, parent, pupil and community representatives. The Division of Research and Development accomplished its assignment, the design and demonstration of needs assessment, instructional objectives and evaluation procedures for use at the individual school level. The Division provided extensive in-service of school principals. As a result, almost 70 per cent of the schools did implement some of these steps. It is important to note that support for the Division's activities in this regard did not come from general funds, but outside sources, namely grants from Title IV-C and Title V of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Funding prospects from state compensatory funds which had supported the development of the curriculum also faded eventually. No support was available for the continued refinement of the curricula by the supervisory staff and their committees. Changes in leadership of the curriculum and instruction department brought another direction for the supervisors toward the interdisciplinary possibilities in their curricular products rather than the steps to authenticate and validate the curricular products. Leadership from the superintendent's cabinet was minimal during this phase. Conse-

quently, the efforts dissipated at the central staff level. Only the needs assessment process and, in scattered instances, the curriculum committees survived in the schools.

Despite the frustrations of this experience, support for school renewal processes remained strong in the Department of Special Projects and the Division of Research and Development. The PEECC Project's coming as it did offered possibilities to test more ideas about change.

Reform and Renewal

Is reform and renewal possible in the large urban school district? Our experience with this project suggests a qualified answer of "yes." The PEECC experience has reinforced our belief that certain qualifications are exceedingly important, if not critical, for the success of any would-be change project. Although these prerequisites are not emphasized in the change literature, their lack of emphasis could result from the theoretical interests generally guiding the bulk of the literature.

There are few linkages made between theory and practice in these materials.

Our experience has identified six critical prerequisites for so-called changed projects in large urban school districts. These include:

1. Time and Resources
2. Role Clarification
3. Bureaucratic Supports for Change
4. Knowledge Base
5. Staff Development or Retraining
6. Models for Planning, Development and Evaluation

Time and Resources

Few change commentators emphasize the need for dollars for change efforts. They may write euphemistically of the "resources" needed

to support change efforts, but rarely do they explain the conditions of the financial base for change projects. Change models do not typically feature cost components.

Our experience demonstrated that the PEECC Project could never have existed without support from the Gund Foundation. Foundation funding, most importantly, bought the planning time which the teachers required. The provision for payment to teachers for planning time required substantial financial resources. Given the contract agreements between the local teachers' union and the board of education, there was no other way that planning could occur except through teacher reimbursement. This source of reimbursement could not have been supplied by the general fund. The financial base provided by the Foundation also guaranteed the possibility that consultants and university training courses for project participants could be secured. Foundation support provided a freedom of choice never before experienced in the district. The support freed the project from the usual "trade-offs" involved in the general fund budgeting operation.

Our experience produced a new sensitivity about the dimensions of the resources which are needed to support change projects. In addition to those resources which may be purchased in the marketplace, there will be others which are "on line" in the school district. Examples would include services of various subject area supervisors, research and development specialists, personnel recruiters, warehousing and purchasing staff and the like. A school district may have to plan to utilize these supports to mount the project. Undoubtedly, this situation presents a test of the commitment of the district to the degree that it provides such "in kind" supports for the project.

The PEECC Project demonstrated that to consider change, one will need to consider utilizing time and resources. Budgetary problems plague

4 the majority of urban school districts at the present time. The prospect for change projects may not be promising. Simplistically, redirection of currently available resources may be a possibility. More than likely, major change efforts will come only through new sources of funding. The reality of time and resources merits more thorough consideration in the study of reform and renewal projects. Our experience has caused us to view these considerations as the "First Cause" in the matters of change.

Role Clarification

Despite the best of intentions, some organizational procedures in the project contributed to role ambiguity. Initially, considerable attention was given to clarification of the role of the project manager with the staffs of the two demonstration schools. Both manager and staffs, particularly the principals, had to share some decision making. Cooperation was critical in such situations as scheduling meetings, securing consultants and maintaining project records. A change of principal and the project manager in the second year of the project precipitated problems. With these changes, role clarification problems intensified particularly in the school with the change of principal. Clashes were frequent and written memoranda proliferated. Although the friction diminished during the succeeding years of the project, it served to constrict the role of the manager in the first school. Given the operational style in the school with the new principal, only the support of the Assistant Superintendent brought some of the administrative duties of the project under the project manager's control. In the second school, where the manager had been a staff member, the manager continued to enjoy good rapport. Her new role did not diminish this status.

Other staff assigned to the project also experienced needs for clarification of their roles in the project. University consultants had

to choose between becoming advocates for particular points of view for the school as opposed to the "downtown" view. Sometimes, the consultants faced choices between what the teachers saw as necessary as opposed to what the "office" viewed as necessary. Central staff questioned the role of consultants under Foundation auspices who visited but rarely provided feedback. An evaluator precipitated problems in attempting to assume some administrative functions and evaluative responsibilities for this program segment at one and the same time. He grappled unsuccessfully with this conflict of interest and eventually resigned.

Another source of the disparity of views about staff roles between the school staff and others certainly arose from the original concept of the project. From the vantage of "hindsight" it is evident that the school district personnel and the Design Team Consultants had different views about the role and perhaps authority of the school staff. Drawing upon an experiential base of criticism of school bureaucracies and their notorious records for resistance to change, the consultants urged that the school staffs be guaranteed minimal interference from central staff. The consultants feared that central staff would "pull rank" in decisions. They foresaw no meaningful change as occurring if this happened. The caution of the consultants for a "hands-off" stance weighed heavily upon the school central staff. In fact, "anticipatory watchfulness" might characterize their outlook as the project unfolded. Central staff members avoided involvement. One school particularly, sought "outside" consultants only. This produced an insularity between this school and the central office staff. This "stand-off" situation was, and is quite unique in the district as a whole to this day.

This insularity worked against the major purpose which the consultants advocated--the capturing of the significant aspects of the

planning process for diffusion to all schools. At the initial orientation meeting, the school planning teams vetoed any attempts to record planning sessions. Their fears were founded on the idea that these records would be used to evaluate them and would somehow find their way into their personnel jackets. As a result, they worked without any visibility of their planning efforts. Except for a retrospective analysis of what was attempted in the planning meeting, no documentation of the planning procedures was obtained. This situation prompted a major "recouping" effort when it became evident that "diffusion" rather than "program" would be required by the Foundation.

One can conjecture, of course, that if teachers had understood more about the evolving nature of their planning roles in the demonstration phase of the project, their reactions at the thought of study of their planning processes would have been more positive. Would a cooperative relationship have developed between school staff and supervisors if the roles of the supervisors had been more clearly delineated as "resources" rather than "monitors?" By way of contrast, when the helping role of the supervisors was clearly and intentionally communicated in the diffusion phase, cooperative efforts were more apparent between supervisors and school staffs.

In retrospect, it appears that role uncertainty had serious implications for the project. This situation may have actually limited some aspects of its success. Our experience brought a new appreciation for role clarification as a major and basic aspect of efficient, if not effective, operations.

Bureaucratic Supports for Change

Consultant influence counted heavily in the development of the initial proposal. They cautioned against probable sabotaging of project

activities within the school bureaucracy. This stance did not do justice to the clinical role of the supervisor in the Cleveland district. By and large, district supervisors have attempted to function as consultant and resource personnel, not as evaluators of teachers. The consultants miscalculated the necessity to tap the channels of the bureaucracy for support of the change process, rather than severing all connections. The early years of the project demonstrated that a lack of meaningful involvement of the district's central staff in supporting the local school staffs' planning, produced an insular, constricted situation. It appeared to guarantee a "malnutrition" of the change elements. Another effect was that changes undertaken in the two project schools were "contained" within these two schools.

A use of bureaucratic support was evident in the formation of the Diffusion Task Force by the school district. The Task Force consisted of key administrators, supervisors, representatives of the teachers' union and administrators' union, as well as staff development and research specialists. The school district also provided a team of six support teachers, which was later expanded to nine members, to provide for released time for teachers who formed the planning teams in the diffusion schools. The influence of the Diffusion Task Force promoted meaningful involvement of central staff subject supervisors in providing assistance to the diffusion schools. As a result, the activities in these schools actually drew vitality from the system. Staff supervisors were expected to bring their specialized knowledge and services to the maintenance of the program. Providing for a reporting arrangement of such services periodically to the Diffusion Task Force facilitated exchange of information. It was also a signal to all concerned that the project was important.

It is evident that the consultants meant the best for the project. It is evident, also, that the typical stance in the change literature is to

equate "bureaucracy" with "resistance to change." Certainly this may be possible and it may be probable in many circumstances. More than likely, however, school districts may actually operate along a continuum of behaviors--which may be more or less bureaucratic. If the bureaucracy is in good operating order, it proves to be a splendid support for the change project. Difficulties come when people do not perform as expected.

Knowledge Base

This paper visualizes the knowledge base for change as consisting of awareness of the best available scholarship about the procedures to undertake change actions as well as the areas to be changed--instruction, discipline content and the like. Second, the knowledge base is considered to be information about the specific conditions and circumstances in the school to be changed. There appears to be little recognition in the literature about the necessity for the knowledge base for change. There is little differentiation in the change literature as well between various levels of change and the change agents who function at such levels.

The PEECC project, unfortunately, did not mandate that specific provisions be made in the matter of knowledge base nor in the action areas of the change agents. Its view was that if the school were the unit of change, the teachers would and could function as the agents of change. The project design gave minimal consideration to the need for development of planning capabilities by the teachers and the knowledge they would require along the way to accomplishing their task. It was assumed that there was a broader knowledge base than there was. It became apparent in certain developments in the project schools that the typical approach to problem solving was to select solutions first and then the problems to which they could be applied. Difficulties in defining and delimiting the problem surfaced. Of course, the project encouraged the vision of "whole" school

change. Yet, "whole" school change may require a wider coalition of change agents and a wider perspective of the school program. Although teachers require a view of the continuity of the instructional program in their school and beyond, their daily role is narrower. It is one related to the on-going decisions at the instructional level involving students, materials and teaching. Before there can be "total" school reform and renewal, there must be teacher reform and renewal at the instructional level. Teachers will require time to learn how to plan for themselves and with their colleagues to build consensus for, if not cohesion in, the school program. Inputs from other levels in the district will also be necessary and vitalizing--if not on the basis of the chance that there will be a fuller realization of the extant scholarship in the matter, then at least on the basis of the possibility of a broader perspective of the educational process.

Clearly, the PEECC Project made assumptions about the adequacy of the teachers' knowledge base to undertake "whole school" reform and renewal in the project schools. This proved to be a faulty assumption. It is evident that a more effective procedure would have been to examine the scope of the tasks for which the teachers were to have responsibility. "Delimitation" and "focus" would appear to be two helpful hallmarks in making such decisions.

Staff Development or Retraining Programs

The change literature recognizes staff development or retraining programs as critical factors in building the appropriate knowledge and attitude to undertake change programs. The literature has some major gaps such as little documentation of the conditions necessary for effective retraining programs, generally, incomplete descriptions of the degree of staff training conducive to adequate performance in change programs and limited

treatment of the relationship of the training programs to what was proposed in the change programs.

Staff development was a major component of the PEECC project. Initially, the retraining programs were to be provided through a series of consultants which were amply supported through Foundation sponsorship. During the first year, sessions presented at the two project schools featured a multitude of topics. For example, such topics included review and selection of criterion referenced tests, development of behavioral objectives, use of reading tests in an instructional management system, development of self-concept, relation of content area instruction to reading skill development, design of skill development monitoring systems, construction and use of audio and visual instructional aids and use of local museum instructional resources. Activities ranged from presentations to the entire school staff by nationally known consultants to small workshops held by local subject supervisors with various subcommittees of the planning groups. One school relied primarily on central staff while the other school placed greater reliance on outside consultants for their staff development activities.

The far-reaching nature of the topics during this series of training sessions reflected the expansive scope of the planning underway. Just as there was a lack of continuity and focus in the themes, there was a lack of relationships between consultants and staffs. In fact, some staff came to view these consultants as the "hit and run" variety. This consultant might provide helpful information, but invariably was rarely available after recommendations had been tried in the classroom. Perhaps the staff wished for consultants the same role of accountability which they were beginning to visualize for themselves. The solution proposed, at the suggestion of the central office administration, was to seek the assistance of a local

university. It was considered that continuity, relevance and maintenance of the retraining programs would be more easily attainable by giving this responsibility to a university team. Extensive negotiation between the school staffs and representatives of all universities in the Cleveland area eventually produced an arrangement with one university to provide a series of courses as support to implementation of programmatic elements. Significant portions of the 1975-76 and 1976-77 budgets were earmarked for the series of courses. The courses were to be tuition-free. They would be field-based at the two-school sites. A total of 15 graduate credit hours would be offered for the course package in an after-school time frame.

Two features of the arrangement attempted to overcome disenchantments experienced in the initial retraining attempts. The first provided for a curriculum review committee consisting of various representatives of the school staff and university instructors. The committee was to provide input to the instructor about course strengths, weaknesses, problems and solutions. This feedback was to be utilized to ensure that the courses were more responsive. The second feature was the provision of follow-up personnel at each school. These persons were to support teachers in applying the strategies emphasized in the courses in individualizing instruction. as outreach representatives of the retraining program--it was visualized that these staff would assist teachers in clarifying and solving the problems at hand.

The array of course titles provided by the university indicate the global needs which the staff identified. Course titles included "Mental Health in the Classroom," "The Study of Instruction," "Practicum in Curriculum," "Study of Self-Concept," "Exceptionality in an Urban Setting," and "A Curriculum for the Urban Child." By and large, the courses focused on theory-based knowledge which teachers could apply in the course

of their experience.

In one school, it was the wish of the teachers to utilize instructional strategies to improve self-concepts and social adjustment of pupils, and, additionally, to adapt curriculum models to their own particular instructional situation. Dissatisfaction with the staff development program grew in this school. Staff expectations and experience produced conflicts. It is simplistic, perhaps, to engage in second guessing about the reasons. It appeared to be a case of the right combination of personalities and antagonisms to produce misunderstandings.

In the second school, where the program emphasized strategies to improve pupil self-concept and social functioning as well as the instructional development of curriculum materials for social studies, science and mathematics, greater satisfaction with the university program was reported by the university instructors.

In retrospect, it must be stated that the staff retraining program attempted to respond to the needs of the staff. However, several important clarifications were lacking. No effort was made, and it is evident that it should have been done, to determine just how much retraining the teachers required for their new tasks. Even more basically, no effort was made to determine whether or not the courses responding to teachers' reported needs were really appropriate to the demands of the change program. It was never clear that rudiments of the change program were clearly established. Therefore, designing the training program for such a change program with evolving structure was remarkable.

The staff retraining program also triggered an unique situation where teachers, supposedly with professional expertise, who are accustomed to performing their roles with low visibility in the school bureaucracy, suddenly received considerable attention in the matter of the problems

they were reporting. That there would not have been teacher trepidations in such a situation is to understate the problem.

No input was sought by the university consultants from the central supervisory staff about what was "supposed to be" in the matters of curriculum and instruction. This appeared to be a serious miscalculation. Of course, the university instructors wished to show allegiance to the school staff. This situation precluded the university instructors' gaining a first-hand knowledge of what should have been operating in the schools. Whether they would have found anything of value in the curricular guides remains to be seen. In any event, this situation served to reinforce the insularity of project operations in the schools.

It is evident from the literature that even willing teachers would have to go through a retraining period to take on new skills and attitudes for performing a new role. This realization was never adequately communicated to the staff. It was not recognized for the critical need that it was by the school system. One example of such a need for an adequate knowledge base was seen in the persistence of one school staff to focus on an objective to foster pupil self-concept. During the second year of the project, this staff had participated in at least four sessions with an outside consultant. Still the translation of the theory into classroom practices eluded them. In an attempt to operationalize and persist in their convictions, they undertook an additional course in the university retraining program. As is indicated in the evaluation of that segment of the program, operationalization never was demonstrated nor was the expected impact. Regrettably, no claims were made by the university instructor of the effects of the course upon the teaching of the participants.

A major opportunity was lost in the lack of systematic and on-going evaluation of the impact of the retraining program on the teachers'

classroom practices. Although an effort was made in the 1976-1977 year to observe classroom instruction as a phase of the evaluation, only a limited sample of teaching performance was obtained. The results suggest that some start was made in the use of materials, pupil groups, pupil individualization, differentiation of objectives and pupil concept. However, it was never determined whether or not the awareness of strategies for individualizing instruction and enhancing pupil self concept was ever translated into workable classroom lessons.

Models for Planning, Development and Evaluation

It is this paper's contention that a major error in project design occurred when it was assumed that a model for planning, development and evaluation could emerge from the efforts of two hard pressed teachers' planning groups. From the vantage point of hindsight, this assumption seriously overestimated the knowledge base about planning in the groups, the feelings of the planning groups suddenly laden with such responsibilities and the levels of support that actually could be made available to the initial groups. It must be stated that the initial project manager was thrown, without preparation, into the task of facilitating this process. When it became apparent that the planning process could not be extracted systematically from the activities of the project schools, the responsibility for diffusion and the development of a training plan for the diffusion schools was assigned to the Division of Research and Development. On an emergency schedule, Division staff with input from the university consultants, serving as diffusion evaluators, designed a series of planning, development and evaluation modules. Concurrently in the Division, another planning project was underway with design of a model for use of schools in the district. The work of this project provided a substantial base in the adaptation work. What finally emerged is, in fact, a local planning, de-

velopment and evaluation model utilized by the Division. A diagram of the model is attached as Appendix A. This model is employed in the diffusion phase of the project now currently underway.

The lack of a model was particularly serious in the area of evaluation. Despite all hopes to the contrary, evaluation tasks for the initial years of the project were not accomplished to the extent desired. The major block was failure to convey support and security to those charged with project responsibilities that the program rather than the personnel were to be evaluated. This fear remains a perennial one in program evaluations in school districts. From the perspective of the Division of Research and Development, the evaluation of these first years was lost on the day that the staff vetoed the attempt to record their efforts at planning. Although this request may have been brash, an attempt at compromise should have been undertaken at this point. An administrative attitude of "not rocking the boat" and the inevitable combination of events and personalities conspired against the effort.

Another major factor to the failure of the evaluation during the first year was the tendency of the project manager to rely on the project evaluator for assistance in gathering and presenting information to the planning groups. This resulted in the evaluator's assuming more administrative functions that was necessary or desirable. This situation precipitated a conflict of interest in which the evaluator really could not evaluate what he had actually planned for the groups.

Given the negative perceptions of the planning teams of the dominance of the evaluator in many matters during the first year--and a hesitancy on his part to carry out data collection related to the planning process, the situation produced a stalemate. No documentation of the planning process nor of the other aspects were produced in the first year.

All that could be attempted was a retrospective analysis by university evaluators in the following years.

In the matter of the information about specific conditions and circumstances in the school to be changed and undergoing change, the evaluative process did not accomplish its full potential. Although the evaluation traditions in the district mandated continuous feedback to teachers and others involved in projects, the project did not successfully maintain this flow of evaluative information. The fears of the project schools was never more apparent than in their attitude toward participation in evaluation activities and application of the findings to the particular situation.

Fortunately, evaluation of the summative efforts was scheduled to be undertaken in the third year of programmatic operations at the two project schools. This was accomplished by an evaluator, the third to be assigned to the Division of Research and Development. Following the first evaluator, a second staff member had assumed responsibility, but then left to assume doctoral studies. Through persistent efforts in building a credibility base, the third project evaluator was able, eventually, to receive a higher level of cooperation than ever before.

Work in the 11 diffusion schools has not produced the evaluation conflicts nor the problems with knowledge of change procedures experienced in the two project schools. Careful attention, of course, is being given to building the knowledge base of the teachers engaged in planning. This has been done through utilization of the training modules, as described above, and provision of a facilitator. It is apparent, at this time, that the modules will require revisions. Their utilization, however, has provided an appropriate structure and focus for the task. The facilitator or diffusion

manager functions as a resource for the teachers in working through the modules. During this time, teachers implement a series of mini-projects in their own classrooms or in collaboration with other teachers. These experiences serve as the bases for more massive change efforts in their schools which will necessarily involve all teachers and a total school planning team. The systematic sequences in the modules attempt to provide teachers with tools to analyze needs at their school and in their classroom. At the same time, they practice the design and implementation of programs to meet these needs. Concurrently, teachers are involved in utilizing feedback mechanisms for assessment of the effects of their mini-projects. Because teachers are directly concerned with assessment decisions for their mini-projects, resistance has been significantly reduced. As questions about evaluation and other areas arise which require clarification or information from central staff, the facilitator serves as liaison between the planning teams and school district staff or outside consultant, whichever the case may be, arranging information sessions or distributing pertinent materials. The rationale between the "module-facilitator" approach is that a reality-based learning experience in which the teacher as the learner sets the parameters and receives the feedback will develop teacher competencies. Whatever momentum of success is produced is visualized as the force for further efforts to change.

Another major support to the diffusion phase of the project has been the Diffusion Task Force. Through this group, information has been channeled to and from the project across the various administrative levels and between various constituencies of the district. The Task Force coalesced as a group when, as decisions were being made about schools' participation in the diffusion phase, representatives of the Teachers' Union distributed a warning about the possibility that participation would bring

"extra work" with the necessary time nor money being made available. At that point, the Task Force recommended to the administration that support teachers to release teachers for planning during the school day, would be needed if the diffusion process were to have any chance for success. The Administration supported the Task Force. This action made a substantial contribution to the "security field" of everyone involved. The Task Force has attempted to channel information to the schools. Their view of the necessity of evaluation is also positive. The Task Force is an important influence among the teachers, who feel there is support for their efforts, and see weekly evidence of it in the form of a teacher support team.

The PEECC Project demonstrated all of the problems generated by evaluation that has or probably will ever be cited by the literature. The project evaluation was shared between university evaluators and the Division of Research and Development. For example, the self-concept component and the initial phase of diffusion were contracted to university evaluators. The operations evaluation was the responsibility of the Research Division. Staff development evaluation was handled by university personnel who were charged with delivering the courses.

At this point in time, it appears that substantial differences in operations between the initial and diffusion stages are impacting attitudes toward evaluation. Cooperation of participants is at a higher level. Hopefully, the evaluation efforts will be productive for all involved.

Implications

What did we learn? Undoubtedly, we hope that we are wiser about matters related to change efforts and their evaluations. This wisdom suggests that implications for renewal and reform in urban school districts emerge from analysis of the productive and counterproductive elements of our experiences. Cleveland, of course, shares just about all of the critical

problems which any large, urban school district faces at this point in our nation's history. The challenges triggered by soaring costs, decreasing enrollments, dwindling tax bases, school closing, staff reductions and desegregation programs are unparalleled in current experience. The challenges translate into new and continuing demands for renewal and reform. It is clear that organized, planned programs of change must be implemented. It is also clear that such change actions will require a financial base. The more elaborate the program, the more extensive the support required. This situation produces a reality for the school district that reallocation of present resources, generation of outside support or combination of these possibilities will be necessary. Staff time will be the most expensive and yet most critical resource to provide for these efforts. If a school district operates under negotiated agreements with various unions and associations, then financial bases for support of change becomes even more critical. Few writers, in the extensive discussions of change and renewal projects, address what we consider to be a major prerequisite--the necessity of a financial base for change.

Our experience demonstrated a second reality for change projects. Would-be change efforts need to provide very systematic steps to ensure that the roles of project participants are definitely understood by the participants and their colleagues. Attention to this concern in the literature highlights the social dynamics of such situations. There needs to be a fuller sensitivity to the need for time to learn new responsibilities. Experience with this project and others indicates that it is not unlikely that a period of three years is a probable learning period before the operational problems associated with understanding roles are solved. Then, a need for reorientation to the tasks of established staff and training of new staff continues concurrently. Our experience also suggests that

in addition to understanding the time factor for learning new roles, a change operation will have to convey "a security for making mistakes" to those persons who accept taking the risks in making changes. Role clarification is never to be taken for granted. It is deliberate and on-going.

A third area of our new-found reality relates to the matter of bureaucratic organization of the typical school district. It is our opinion that the matter is not too genuinely understood in the change literature. Our experience supports what Tumin has suggested that "when the division of labor is clear, the responsibilities clear, the goals set and the accountability established, the bureaucracy can function."²⁵ Peculiar as it is, bureaucratic organization probably has preserved some districts from being much worse than they may be. Its functioning depends upon how the power is authorized and exercised. If the would-be change agent recognizes the potential of the bureaucracy and knows his own situation, bureaucratic organization can be utilized as a support for change.

A fourth reality emphasized by our experience is that would-be change agents require a knowledge base for their work. While extensive knowledge bases exist in the district staff, serious miscalculation is possible when new assignments to planning groups and the like, extend the functioning and decision-making areas for these staff. Careful judgment must be exercised in balancing demands with the competencies, and in the meantime, providing the necessary learning opportunities. The solution that emerged in our experience, the training modules for planning, may represent a more structured and directive approach. Whatever their deficiency and there is evidence there are quite a few, the modules provided a framework. It will remain to be seen whether or not they can be an efficient strategy to produce effective changes. Most important in our search for a solution, the modules represented an attempt to operationalize

change theory. Operationalizing change remains the critical problem. The literature has not addressed adequately the solutions for translating change theories into practice, nor analyzing the change practices for the theories that are undoubtedly there.

Staff development and retraining efforts present a fifth reality for change efforts. Whatever the mode of the retraining effort--within the district or outside the district, in-service programs or university courses, with pay or without pay, with credit or without credit, the same problem of what course and how to improve staff skill remains. Evaluation of our efforts did not document the full impact of the training provided. We did not learn if what was provided should have been provided. What teachers really need to do their job has to be established. The fact that certificated staff with and without tenure were to be involved established participants' concerns about their roles as learners. A guiding concern for staff retraining efforts is to know first what responsibilities the staff must carry out in the change effort. Another concern will be to determine that what is provided enhances the changes to be made. Finally, there will be the concern that will not retreat as much as we fear to face it, did the training make any difference for the students involved.

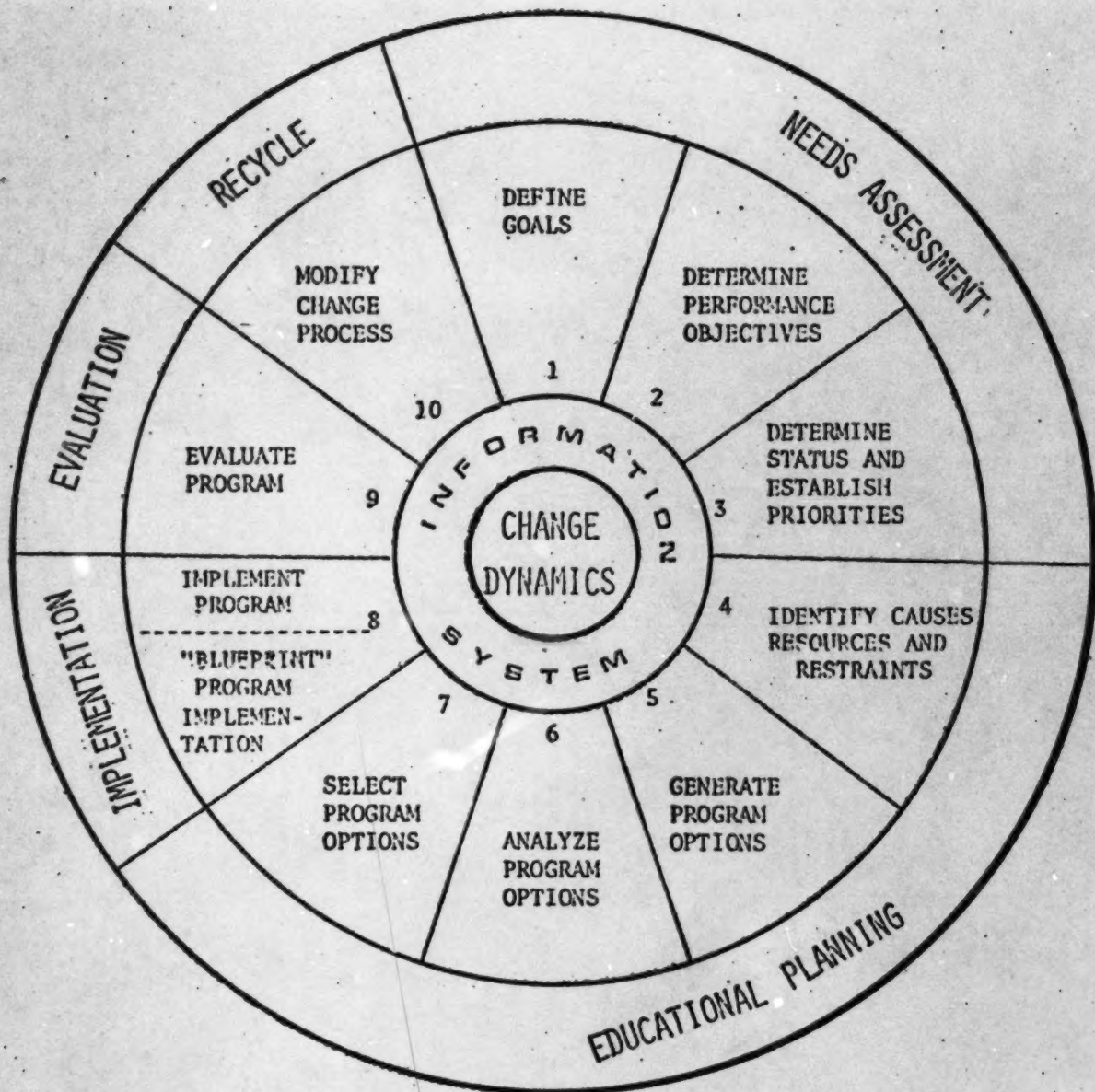
Our list of realities concludes with the critical need for a model for planning, development and evaluation as the prerequisite for embarking on the "sea of change." A model, when found wanting, hopefully, will be subject to rejection. If this condition emerges out of experience and not hearsay, it probably will be a natural, healthy outcome.

A major miscalculation in our experience was to venture into the project anticipating that a model could emerge. When it became apparent that the planning process utilized in the two target schools was lost for translation into an operational package, a solution was attempted

in designing a model for planning. The experience does underscore the critical importance, however, of an agreed upon framework, be it model or whatever, before the launching of such efforts. To thrust staffs into change efforts without a structure in typical school situations where the time is running out is naive.

Our wisdom suggests that the change literature has its share of oversights, if not myths. This criticism is offered respectfully with a realization that our experience may have been unique or even quite provincial so as to preclude our finding mirror images in the professional literature. The criticism is also offered with at least a modicum of appreciation for the multitudinous conditions of time, place, information, people and the interactions which such factors generate even in the simplest of change schemes for school programs.

A CHANGE PROCESS



Footnotes

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